

# Songs of Our Lives

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Category: How to Train Your Dragon

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2014-08-12 20:14:34

Updated: 2015-05-31 05:45:32

Packaged: 2016-04-26 19:31:35

Rating: K+

Chapters: 13

Words: 14,545

Publisher: [www.fanfiction.net](http://www.fanfiction.net)

Summary: [SIDE-PROJECT] Each "chapter" of this "story" is based on song lyrics and is its own independent short work. Stories in this collection will vary based on lyrics. These are stories I write as "warm-ups" before writing my more substantial HTTYD stories. If you need a quick HTTYD short story, try checking here. Will be updated as inspiration (and good music) strikes.

## 1. All Good Things Must End Someday

**\*\*All good writers need side projects and I'm no exception. This "story" is my side project. Each "chapter" is an independent story based on song lyrics that I hear. Most of the time, the songs come up on my Pandora and I just write. The "chapters" won't be too long. Just short little stories to get your HTTYD fix. For me, though, these are my "warm-up writings" which I do before I write something more substantial. Anything goes here. I hope you enjoy!\*\***

\* \* \*

><p>"They say that all good things must end someday."<br>-\_A Summer Song\_, Chad and Jeremy

888

The elder looked out over the water. Berk, his home, stood behind him and he smiled at the fond memories held by this place. Many, many years ago, back when he was Chief, this village had been much different. Whereas it was quiet now, before there was always the joyful shouts of children and roaring playfulness of the winged reptiles who also called Berk "home". Those were the days, but they ended so suddenly that none of the Vikings had a chance to react. One day, their reptilian friends were there and the next day they were absent, vanished without a single trace. Even the elder's own dragon had found a way to leave this "wet heap of rock" as he, himself, had so affectionately called Berk.

Above him, the sky was cloudy and gray. It had been this way since

that day. He could remember flying through the sky, the rush of feeling it had given him. He missed those days. It was sad to think that his own son, the current Chief of Berk, would never know such a feeling. They had already left by the time his son came into this world.

If not for his son, there was nothing left for the elder. His wife had passed on to Valhalla some years prior and the elder knew that his time was approaching. Some days, he thought he would welcome it gladly, but there were other days that he still held out hope, hope that he would again see his best friend one last time. That hope was short-lived; his friend could not fly, not without him. and he was much too old to fly now.

"Dad?" That voice belonged to his son. The elder knew what his grown boy would say, that he shouldn't be out here in the cold, but the elder was not bothered by the winter chill.

"Son," he began, in his creaky voice, cracked with age. He turned to face Berk's Chief. "Did I ever tell you?" The elder stopped, but his son said nothing, waiting to hear whatever it was that his father wanted to say. "There were dragons when I was a boy."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>As I said, nothing too long just little warm-up stories, but I do apologize for starting off on such a sad note.</strong></p>

\*\*Stories in this collection will vary based on whatever I'm listening to when I decide to write. Length might also fluctuate too.\*\*

\*\*I will see you all again next time inspiration (and good music) strikes. I hope you enjoy the stories!\*\*

\*\*Posted: August 12, 2014\*\*

## 2. I'll Share In Your Suffering

"Your hope dangling by a string, I'll share in your suffering to make you well, to make you well."

>-<em>Gone Gone Gone</em>, Phillip Phillips

888

She had been upset all throughout school that day and Hanson Harrison Haddock III had noticed.

Hanson, commonly nicknamed "Hiccup" by his fellow schoolmates (but originated by his slightly-younger cousin Samuel Jorgenson who calls himself Snotlout), had secretly observed Astrid since they were five and in the same kindergarten class. Astrid also lived next-door to Hanson so they had grown up together. In fact, in elementary school, they used to play outside in their yards together. Their games usually involved Astrid, the beautiful princess, as the damsel-in-distress and Hanson, the dashing knight in shining armor. Although, it always seemed that Hanson's clumsiness would end the games in fits of laughter from Astrid before the poor boy could

"rescue" her.

Those days had been amazing, but it all changed when Hanson and Astrid moved on to middle school. Astrid's social status within the school had begun to rise and Hanson's "Hiccup" had decreased. Astrid found a new hobby with cheerleading and Hiccup had started keeping to himself, drawing dragons and other sketches in his new sketchbook.

Still, Hiccup could accept these changes. Astrid still lived next-door and he still could silently observe her from across the hall during school. A small part of him had hoped that she took notice when he'd returned to school with his shiny new prosthetic leg. It had been a sudden change. For it was at one moment Hiccup had been walking his chocolate lab, Toothless, and the next he was diving out in front of a car to save the dog who had stepped out into the road for reasons unknown to the boy. Unknown to him, Hiccup had spent the next several weeks in a coma as the doctors had amputated his left foot and lower left leg and replaced them with the cold metal resemblance of an appendage. The bones in his foot and lower leg, Hiccup was told when he awoke, were shattered beyond repair. This was the only way.

Several weeks later, Hiccup started school at Berk Area High School. As if high school wouldn't be bad enough, he'd constantly tell himself. Now he had to relearn how to walk—you know, because he wasn't clumsy enough as it was when he'd had two working legs. Things couldn't possibly get worse—could they?

As it turned out, yes, they could. Shortly after starting high school, Hiccup had noticed that Astrid hanging out often with a boy. This boy was tall, muscular, and dark-haired, instantly popular with the girls—basically, everything that Hiccup, himself, was not. Hiccup had never seen this boy before and he soon learned why. The boy's name was Eret. He had just moved to Berk from Ireland (but was born in Norway).

Rumors started to fly that Eret and Astrid were dating and Hiccup was soon able to confirm them as he spotted them kissing at her locker one morning before homeroom. His heart was crushed. Though Hiccup had known he would never have a chance with Astrid, it still hurt to see her with another guy, especially one so—so totally opposite of himself. Hiccup had known this feeling would be inevitable; somehow he knew that Astrid would date within her popularity group, but the boy had still held out hope that everything would be different; that, for once, the unpopular boy would have a chance to end up with the popular girl. Ha! Yeah, right!

While Astrid and Eret were together, a relationship spanning through much of high school, Hiccup experienced a growth spurt. He grew taller and more muscular (not like Eret, but enough for girls to start taking notice). Hiccup dodged every advance from eager girls who probably only wanted to date him for his looks—or because his father was CEO of the biggest corporation in Berk. Though he could finally branch out from being a social outcast, Hiccup decided against it; he even kept his common "nerd nickname". Things were just better that way, more familiar.

One afternoon, during junior year, Hiccup found himself, as usual, at his locker and absently observing Astrid from across the hall.

Something was off about her today. She was always alone...well, sometimes her friend Rachele Thorston was with her, but, at least from Hiccup's quick glances, Astrid seemed to be keeping to herself, not even talking with her best friend. Yes, as stated before, Astrid was clearly upset and Hiccup had noticed.

After school, Astrid seemed to disappear before Hiccup could even determine what was going on. He wanted to search the school for her, but, unfortunately, he had a school bus to catch. Hiccup still rode the bus because he had found it quite difficult to learn to drive with his prosthetic. Someday he probably would learn, but he had other important things to worry about right now—like keeping his grades up so he could get into a good college after graduation.

When Hiccup stepped off the bus at his house, he looked over next-door to Astrid's and noticed her sports car parked in the driveway. She was home. Hiccup glanced at the front door of his house, silent, waiting. Hiccup knew that Toothless was probably getting impatient because he was supposed to take the dog for a quick walk around the housing development when he arrived home from school. He didn't care; finding out what was going on with Astrid was more important.

Knowing that Astrid's parents would both be at work until five, Hiccup shifted his backpack for comfort and walked over to Astrid's front door. He stood on the front step with his hand raised but he couldn't bring himself to knock. What would he say? Would she even want to talk with him? Well, there was only one way to find out—he knocked.

At first Hiccup heard nothing and was about to turn and head home when he heard the unlatching of the lock. When Astrid opened the door, Hiccup was surprised to see that her make-up was slightly smeared and her eyes were a bit red as if—had she been crying? Astrid Hofferson never cries!

"We have a doorbell, you know," she greeted, her voice sharp as always.

Sure enough, Hiccup noticed, there was a doorbell on the right side of the door frame. \_\*\*Nice going, Haddock! She probably thinks you're an idiot now. \*\*\_"Oh—you're right!" he covered up his stupidity with a little sarcasm. "How long has that been there?"

Outwardly, Astrid sighed in frustration, but Hiccup did not miss the small smile that appeared on her face for a brief second. "Are you going to come in? I'm not going to hold this door open forever."

Though her voice was still sharp, this was definitely an invitation into Astrid Hofferson's house. Hiccup couldn't refuse. As Astrid stepped aside, Hiccup entered and she shut the door. Hiccup set his backpack down on the floor near the couch and they both sat down.

They were both silent and the lack of sound was a bit nerve-racking for Hiccup. He knew what he wanted to say but not when to say it. Should he wait for her to speak?

"Is there a reason you came here? Because I have some things I need

toâ€|"

Hiccup cut her off, blurting out, "I wanted to ask you if you were okay."

Astrid blinked, clearly not expecting this answer. "I'm fine. You can go home now."

"You don't lookâ€|or sound fine to me. Astrid, you can tell me." Hiccup knew that he was taking some really serious risks here, but he really wanted to know what had made Astrid cry. He waited patiently, hoping she would answer him.

"Eretâ€|dumped me," Astrid replied finally.

Now it was Hiccup's turn to be surprised. How could any boy not want to be considered Astrid's boyfriend? She wasâ€|perfectâ€|well, at least, that's what Hiccup thought.

"I meanâ€|it's okay, I guess. He's moving back to Norway at the end of the schoolyear, butâ€|"

Hiccup froze up slightly. What could he say? How could he cheer up Astrid? That was a hefty burden. Could he, Hiccup, handle it? Still unsure of exactly what to say, Hiccup turned and pulled Astrid into a tight hug. Well aware that he would soon be dead, killed by Astrid for this act of affection, Hiccup told her. "Astrid, I'm sorry, but it'll be okay. I promise that it will."

Slowly, he felt Astrid return the hug. Wait! She wasn't threatening him, beating him into a pulp right there in her living room?

Feeling soft tears against his face, Hiccup pulled away to see Astrid's eyes tearing up again. Did he do something wrong? Wiping Astrid's tears away, Hiccup softly told her, "I know it'll be hard at first." Okay, maybe that was a guess. How would he know? He'd never had a girlfriend. Well, it seemed to be working, so he continued. "But in time you'll realize that you deserve better. If Eret doesn't want to be with you, then that's his fault. He's missing out on being with such an amazing girl as you, Astrid Hofferson."

Noticing that Astrid was no longer crying and that she had given him another small smile, Hiccup continued. "Just remember thatâ€|if you ever want or need someone to talk with, I'll always be right next-door. Always."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Yeahâ€|this started as a warm-up writing and then just morphed intoâ€|this. I know what some are thinking. Astrid and Eret? Well, yes. I didn't want it to be Astrid and Tuffnutâ€|or Snotloutâ€|or Fishlegs. Like HiccupHeather is my second favorite Hiccup pairing, Astrid/Eret is my second favorite Astrid pairing. Also, yes, Astrid crying over a boy? This is a modern AU. It happens.  
\*\*

\*\*See you all again next time inspiration (and good music) strikes!\*\*

\*\*Posted: August 14, 2014\*\*

### 3. The Day You Left Was Just My Beginning

\*\*I'm not usually going to do this, but this "chapter" is just a nice simple little companion piece to the last story. Enjoy!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>"You know, in the end, the day you left was just my beginningâ€|in the end."<br>-\_Stronger (What Doesn't Kill You)\_,  
Kelly Clarkson

888

Astrid Hofferson was lucky to have a neighbor like Hanson Harrison Haddock III.

For the longest time, she didn't believe this. He was a nerd and she was a varsity cheerleader. It was common knowledge that they did not belong together in the same social circles. That was one of the reasons she had felt so attached to the new kid, Eret. Eret was everything that Hanson was notâ€|until junior year, that is. Over the summer between sophomore and junior year, Hanson'd had a growth spurt andâ€|was it even possible that he could look soâ€|? She couldn't dwell on Hanson's changes, though; Eret was her boyfriend and that was fine with herâ€|or was it? Nothing seemed to make sense anymore.

The changes didn't stop there, Astrid soon learned. Before homeroom one morning, Eret had told Astrid that he would be moving back to Norway (where he was born) at the end of the school year and that he felt it best they end their relationship. Inside, Astrid had been crushed. Sure, Eret had been her first serious boyfriend (they had been together for almost two years), but she had not thought it possible that their relationship would ever come to an end.

Somehow, she had managed to nod in agreement and keep calm the rest of the school day, but she knew that her friend Rachele had noticed. As soon as the school day ended, Astrid grabbed her homework from her locker and raced out to her shiny sporty car. Even in the comfort of her car, Astrid remained calm. It was only when she arrived home to her empty house that she plopped down on one of the couches in her living room and cried a little at her newly single status.

Surely the news had traversed the school populace by now. Astrid could hear the whispers already. Lovers like Astrid and Eret, two people so perfectly beautiful, did not just "break up". \_\*\*Oh Gods, the whole school is going to think I cheated on him, aren't they? They're going to think I slept withâ€|\*\*\_

A knock had stopped Astrid from thinking any furtherâ€|which was probably a good thing. She had not bothered to make herself look presentable. It was probably Rachele anyway. Her friend tended to show up unannounced. The person on the other side of the door had not been Rachele; it had been her neighbor. As it turned out, Hanson had stopped by to comfort her and, for reasons unknown to Astrid, she had told him everything.

They had been neighbors for as long as they had been alive and they

even used to play together as kids, but Astrid had never expected to find comfort in his words and presence. Even after the way she had treated him throughout middle and high school, Hanson still promised to always be there for her.

He stayed true to his words. Sometimes Astrid would even stay up late texting Hanson as his comforting words always helped her to unwind after a stressful day of school. Though she would always spend half of her texts apologizing profusely about keeping him awake on a school night, Hanson would always text back, saying that it wasn't a problem or that he wasn't actually tired anyway (which Astrid always knew was a lie). No matter what, he would wait until she slipped off to sleep to end the conversation for the night. That way, Astrid would always have a comforting text to wake up to the next morning before school.

For a while, Astrid only associated with Hanson outside of school. In fact, it was almost the end of senior year before Astrid brought herself to talk to Hanson during the school day—and what a memorable conversation it was!

Astrid had not committed to a relationship since Eret and with senior prom quickly approaching, she was wondering if she would even be attending. Sure there were plenty of boys in the school who would gladly escort Astrid Hofferson to the formal dance, but she turned down every single one of them. If prom was a night to remember, Astrid wanted good memories and most of those boys just wanted to— Well, there was one boy that Astrid wouldn't mind attending prom with, but she was certain that he didn't want to go; he didn't seem like "the dancing type".

Hanson was at his locker when Astrid spotted him. Quietly, she walked up and stood beside him, blocking the paths to the lockers immediately next to his. "Hey, Hiccup," she greeted him, using the nickname that many of their fellow students would call him, a name that dated back to their middle school days.

The startled boy practically dropped his books and Astrid laughed slightly at his minor show of clumsiness.

"A-Astrid—you're—here and—you used my nickname. That never happens." Taking a breath and regaining his composure, Hanson tried again. "I mean—what are you doing here? Not that I'm honored you stopped by my locker and all, but you just—never do that."

"I wanted to say thank you for sticking by me this past year and a half. I'm—really lucky to have a neighbor like you." Before she could think about her actions, Astrid gripped the front of Hanson's T-Shirt and pulled him close. She could feel the shock on the boy's lips as she kissed him, but he relaxed and melted into the kiss.

When they broke apart, Astrid started to walk to her homeroom, but Hanson stopped her as he spoke her name.

"Astrid?"

Turning back around, Astrid answered, "Yeah, Hiccup?"

"You're—probably going to decline because I'm sure it's not your

thing and all, butâ€¦would you go to prom with me? I meanâ€¦you don't have toâ€¦I'm sure I could find something to do instead because I'm super popular and my schedule's probably already full anyway andâ€¦"

Astrid laughed at Hanson's attempt to divert from his original question and she found his underlying fear of rejection to be awfully cute. It was so much better than the boastful and proud nature of his younger cousin Samuel Jorgenson. As it turned out, Astrid did not even have to think about her answer to his question. Cutting off Hanson's rambling, she replied, "Hiccup, you are the only boy I'd ever want to go to prom with, soâ€¦I accept your offer."

\* \* \*

><p><strong>A note on Hiccup's name: In Hiccup's piece, he was mainly referred to as Hiccup because he thinks of himself with that name over his real name. Astrid, however, mainly thinks of Hiccup by his real name (hence his confusion when she called him by his nickname). That's why this story mainly uses Hanson.<strong>

\*\*This story is shorter because most of the action was already told. Therefore, this one partially retells it, but goes further into the future as well.\*\*

\*\*Oh, and the texting was inspired by real life. Me andâ€¦wellâ€¦I don't really know what we were. Something between friends and in a relationship, I guess. Well, we did thatâ€¦but now we don't talk anymore. Hopefully Hiccup and Astrid have better luck.\*\*

\*\*See you next time inspiration (and good music) strikes!\*\*

\*\*Posted: August 14, 2014\*\*

#### 4. You Live For The Fight

\*\*SPOILERS FOR HOW TO TRAIN YOUR DRAGON 2 IN THIS "CHAPTER". YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED! Now, on with the story!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>"You live for the fight when that's all that you've got!"<br>-\_Living on a Prayer\_, Bon Jovi

888

They took her! Those beastsâ€¦those devils had taken Valka, his wife. Even worse, the monster that took her had tried to kill Hiccup, his son, his only child! Stoick the Vast refused to allow the dragons to live, they had caused enough problems, constantly wreaking havoc on the otherwise peaceful island of Berk.

Scooping Hiccup up in his arms to keep the crying little boy safe, Stoick ran to the open door of his house. He watched the shape in the sky grow smaller and smaller. The Chief knew that he would never see his wife again; that dragon was taking her away to the nest to pick her apart and use her bones as toothpicks. Just the thought sent new rage through his thick body. Then and there he vowed that all dragons

had to die. Valka had tried to convince him otherwise and looked what happened to her. In his arms, Hiccup had run out of tears and now softly whimpered, somehow sensing the gravity of the situation. Looking down at his son, the boy still so much smaller than the average Viking, Stoick vowed that he would make sure Hiccup would grow to be the strongest of all the Viking children, just as he had promised Valka when the boy was born. The boy would grow under Stoick's guidance and the Chief would teach him to be a dragon fighter; Stoick refused to lose anyone else to those dragons.

For now, though, there were more pressing issues. Stoick needed to treat the bleeding cut on Hiccup's chin. Just from looking, he could see that the cut was deep. It would surely leave a scar. Hiccup's first scar. Without a doubt, there would be more. There was no older Vikings on the island without at least a scar. Some, like Gobber, had even lost limbs. Stoick would not let such a fate happen to Hiccup. He would protect his son. For Valka. Because Hiccup was all he left of her.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>I loved how this turned out! I don't usually write stories about Stoick, but I couldn't pass up this opportunity! I hope everyone enjoyed reading as much as I enjoyed writing.<strong><strong>

\*\*See you all next time inspiration (and good music) strikes.\*\*

\*\*Posted: August 15, 2014\*\*

## 5. Heartaches Grow A Little Stronger

\*\*Another short companion pieceâ€|I know I said that I wouldn't do it, but I wanted to expand more on the Stoick story. This one takes place before the first movie.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>"Every day heartaches grow a little stronger. I can't stand this pain much longer."<br>-\_What Becomes of the Brokenhearted\_, Jimmy Ruffin

888

Just as he had feared, Stoick had not seen Valka since that dreadful night ten years ago. He wanted to give up believing that she would return safely to Berk. Yet, he still held out hope that she was alive. It was all he could do; Stoick did not want to think of the other more grotesque optionâ€|though it was probably more likely.

Instead, Stoick tried to preoccupy his time, splitting it between leading the village and raising Hiccup. Before his eyes, his son had grown from the tiny infant to a lanky adolescent, still small and slim for his age. As Stoick had feared, the deep cut on Hiccup's chin, though healed now, had left a scar. The boy had never questioned the existence of the scar and Stoick figured Hiccup believed that he had been born with it. Secretly, Stoick was relieved

that Hiccup never asked.

It might seem strange, but Stoick hated that scar. The scar was a physical and constant reminder of his failure, his failure to save Valka and his failure to save Hiccup—but at least Hiccup was still alive. Stoick had promised that night to keep his son safe, to raise and protect him, and the father had kept that promise.

Hiccup's scar wasn't the only painful reminder, though. No, the boy himself was just as much a reminder as the scar he carried. Hiccup had grown now, but he resembled his mother so much. Both were small and compassionate gentle souls. The auburn hair of Hiccup's was the same shade as Stoick's own, but Hiccup's forest-green eyes were his mother's. Stoick found himself constantly avoiding looking into his son's eyes when speaking to him. It wasn't that he didn't want to look at his son. Stoick just didn't want to continue noticing the similarities between Hiccup and Valka. Every day he seemed to find a new resemblance between the two.

Stoick just hoped that Hiccup didn't mistake the frowns and scowls Berk's Chief always seemed to wear when looking to his son. The father was not disappointed in Hiccup. No, Stoick was disappointed in himself. If he would have just fought harder that night, maybe Valka would still be here. Maybe his son would've had the opportunity to grow up knowing his mother. Maybe, just maybe, their small family could've been whole—but that would never happen. Not anymore.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>I feel like this could've turned out better, but it was pretty late when I wrote it. Hope it was still enjoyable!<strong>

\*\*See you all next time inspiration (and good music) strikes.\*\*

\*\*Posted: August 16, 2014\*\*

## 6. Behind The Trigger

\*\*For some reason, this site has been acting strangely for me. I don't know if it ever posted the previous story ("Chapter" 5). It's a very short companion piece to the Stoick scene from "Chapter" 4. If you haven't read it yet, you should. Just saying.\*\*

\*\*Here's another modern AU (and probably longer story). LYRICS IN THIS "CHAPTER" WERE SUGGESTED BY AutomailGrell. Thank you for the suggestion! I hope this story lives up to expectations!\*\*

\*\*(THIS "CHAPTER" RATED "T" FOR ALCOHOL AND IMPLIED VIOLENCE. YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED.)\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>"Sometimes before it gets better, the darkness gets bigger. The person that you'd take a bullet for is behind the trigger."<br>-\_Miss Missing You\_, Fall Out Boy

The bar was dark and the hoppy scent of the brewed beer on tap was strong. This was just what Hanson Harrison Haddock III needed. The 26-year old was heir to the largest national corporation (which was strange considering that it was located in the small forgotten town of Berk). Hanson was not the business-type and he had no interest in taking over the corporation. He craved adventure, but he had to put aside his own interests for his father's and for the media.

Raising his emptied glass into the air, Hanson called out to the bartender-on-duty. "Another!" How many glasses would that be now? Hanson tried hard to remember, but his mind was growing foggier with each sip. Perhaps he should be finished after this next glass. It was growing late anyway. \_\*\*Already after midnight, when did that happen?\*\_

Someone slipped into the seat next to Hanson. "Bartender, a glass of your summer ale on tap!" she called to the bartender who had just filled Hanson's cup and placed it in front of the young man.

"Summer ale?" Hanson asked before he could stop himself. Must be the alcohol talking because he was normally a quiet person, never opting to speak up first. "Isn't that a bit strong for a girl like you?"

The young woman turned to him and Hanson could see that she was about his age, maybe younger. He could not really tell with his vision swimming as it was. "I think I can handle it. I'm stronger than I look," she told Hanson with a smirk of confidence.

"Is that so? What's your name?"

The woman did not immediately answer the question and Hanson could see that she was debating the question. Finally, she replied. "My name is Astrid. That's all you need to know."

Hanson took a sip of his beer and watched as the bartender set a full glass of the pale summer ale in front of Astrid. She took a sip before setting it back down. "I don't even have to ask your name. Your face is only everywhere."

Grimacing, Hanson nodded. "Yes, that is definitely a-\*hiccup\*-downside," he replied, cut off by a sharp hiccup, surely caused from the high amount of alcohol currently within his system. That settled it. This would be his last cup. Once the hiccups started, that was his body's warning to stop pouring in more alcohol before he did something he would regret (or not remember) in the morning.

"Hiccups already? Don't tell me that's only your second glass!" Astrid pointed to the nearly-full cup sitting in front of Hanson.

"This? No! Not even-\*hiccup\* even close. This is probably my-\*hiccup\* fifth or six-\*hiccup\*-th glass. I lost c-\*hiccup\*-count." \_\*\*Nice going, Hanson\*\*\_, the young man scolded himself. \_\*\*You finally find a beautiful girl who shows an ounce of interest in you for reasons other than being a well-known person and you'll probably scare her off with this hiccups attack.\*\*\_

"Good because I was starting to think you were a lightweight," Astrid laughed as she took another swig of her summer ale.

Minutes passed and it was almost an hour later before Hanson and Astrid finished their respective beers and passed their cups back to the bartender. The bar would soon be closing. Hanson needed to get home anyway. There was no way he wanted to spend his Saturday with a worse hangover than the one he was already assured to wake up to in a few hours.

Slipping a fifty dollar bill into the bartender's hands and telling him to keep the change, Hanson stepped down from his barstool and onto slightly unsteady feet. Staggering out of the bar, Hanson waited until Astrid exited. "Will I see you again?" he wondered.

"I'm sure you will," Astrid told him, "but here's my number just in case," she finished, scribbling a series of numbers onto a scrap napkin she had taken from the bar. "See you around, Hiccup," she told him as she walked away. She had started calling Hanson "Hiccup" after the conversation they'd had at the bar. He wasn't pleased with the nickname, but he had surely earned it.

When Hanson grabbed that napkin from Astrid on that seemingly-ordinary night, he could just tell that it would be the start of an interesting relationship with this girl—and he couldn't have been more right. For months they hung out together as their schedules would allow. Hanson came to realize over time that Astrid was very mysterious. Even after months, he still was no closer to learning her last name and she would not even talk of her job. Surely she had one, but Hanson didn't care. It didn't matter. He liked her—maybe even loved her, and that's all that mattered. Besides, he enjoyed laughing at the tabloids and business magazines as they tried to figure out the identity of "Hanson Harrison Haddock III's mysterious girlfriend".

Hanson set down another one of those magazines as he prepared for his "date night" with Astrid. They had been on a few similar "date nights" before, but this one would be special. Tonight, Hanson would ask Astrid if she wanted to be his girlfriend officially. She would probably decline the offer, but he'd never know without trying.

He would be meeting Astrid at the restaurant, just as he'd done on each of the prior date nights. She had never given him her address and Hanson guessed that she never would. On his way out of his penthouse apartment, Hanson looked between the waiting limousine and his flashy sports car. Ultimately, he decided just to drive himself. At least that would attract slightly less attention.

The restaurant was upscale, a completely different atmosphere from the bar where Hanson had first met Astrid. Walking in, Hanson told the host that he had a reservation and, noticing Astrid sitting with her back to him, he continued past the host stand without waiting for a reply. He was Hanson Harrison Haddock III. He could get away with stunts like that.

"Evening, Milady," Hanson spoke softly so only Astrid could hear.

"Oh, you're here now, Hiccup. I've been waiting forever. I thought you weren't going to show."

Hanson chuckled as he took his seat across from Astrid. "Knowing you, you've probably only been waiting five minutes. Soâ€¦what's good to eat here?"

They made small talk throughout dinner and as the meal was coming to an end, Hanson grew a little nervous. He knew that he had to start the conversationâ€¦that conversationâ€¦now or he never would. "Soâ€¦Astrid, I was wonderingâ€¦?"

Before he could work up the courage, Astrid interrupted. "Let's take a walk!" She stood up and grabbed one of Hanson's hands, pulling him from the restaurant. With his other hand, Hanson pulled a one-hundred dollar bill from his wallet and laid it onto the table. Astrid led the way and Hanson followed. \_\*\*Maybe she wants to walk through the park downtown. That would be great! A romantic setting for me to ask herâ€¦\*\*\_

Hanson did not get an opportunity to finish his thought as he noticed where Astrid was leading him to. They were quickly approaching the dark side of town, known for riots and gang fights andâ€¦definitely not a place Hanson wanted to be after the sun set. "Umâ€¦Astridâ€¦"

The streetlights flickered off with no warning and Hanson stopped, pushing Astrid behind him in an effort to protect her. Hanson waited, body tense, for anything. He was expecting someone to jump him and demand money. What he wasn't expecting was the flashlight that clicked on and approached him.

"Hanson Harrison Haddock III, son of Stanton Haddock and sole heir to his company. What a pleasant surprise."

Hanson knew that voice anywhere and he recognized it even before the man turned the flashlight up to illuminate his grimy face. "Alvin."

Alvin Haddock was the younger brother of Hanson's father, but Hanson had dropped the term "Uncle" years ago. The man hated his older brother and he hated his nephew. In return, Hanson and his father had distanced themselves from Alvin.

"As nice as this family reunion is," Alvin spoke again, his voice thick with fake compassion, "I think it's overâ€¦and so is your life. Say goodbye."

Hanson should have expected this from the moment Alvin showed his ugly face. The man had attempted to take his nephew's life several times. Alvin knew that with Hanson gone, there would be no heir to Stanton Haddock's company. It wasn't even that Alvin wanted the company for himself either. Alvin was still jealous that he was not the rightful heir. He was jealous of Stanton and he was jealous of Hanson.

"Astridâ€¦runâ€¦" Hanson ordered, his eyes never leaving Alvin's illuminated face.

From somewhere in front of Hanson, he heard the sound of a gun safety clicking off. \_\*\*This might really be it\*\*\_, he thought. Every other time Alvin had tried to take his life, Hanson's father had been there

to save him. Not this time, thoughâ€|and though he could try to outrun the bullet, he'd probably never make it.

Alvin's flashlight clicked off. "He's all yours."

Hanson took several steps back in instinct, but he knew there was little use. The streetlamp right above the gunman clicked on and Hanson almost stumbled in disbelief and shock. "A-Astridâ€|?"

She looked just as she had in the restaurant. Her blood-red dress hugging every elegant curve and her blonde hair tied back in its usual braid. "I'm sorry, Hiccup," she told him, her voice devoid of emotion. "I really did like you, but a job is a jobâ€|and Alvin hired me to make you my next target."

Hanson had nothing to say. Wasn't this just his luck? He finally found a woman that he likedâ€|and she was to be his assassin. In resonance, the young heir shut his eyes and waited, praying that Death would take him quickly.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>I liked this. It was so outside what I normally write that it was fun. I know that it's not much of a "warm-up writing" but I hope you all liked it anyway.<strong>

\*\*THANKS AGAIN TO AutomailGrell FOR THE LYRICS SUGGESTION!\*\*

\*\*See you all next time inspiration (and good music) strikes.\*\*

\*\*Posted: August 19, 2014\*\*

## 7. Learning To Fly, But I Ain't Got Wings

\*\*THIS STORY IS BASED ON THE "TEST DRIVE" SEQUENCE FROM THE FIRST MOVIE. IT MAY BE HELPFUL TO WATCH THAT SCENE WHILE READINGâ€|OR, AT LEAST, RECALL THE EVENTS IN THE SEQUENCE. That said, hope you enjoy!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>"I'm learning to fly, but I ain't got wings. Coming down is the hardest thing."<br>-\_Learning to Fly\_, Tom Petty

888

The cool air rushed through Hiccup's hair and he felt a rush of excitement. Sure he had flown on the back of Toothless before, but thisâ€|this was different. This was the test run, the test drive, of all the equipment he had created. Today, he was testing the product of several weeks' worth of time and effort. Hiccup was not just testing the prosthetic tailfin (although that was a big part of it). He was testing the control mechanism that was triggered by the flicking of his left foot in its stirrup. He was testing the saddle and the rope that kept him aboard. He was even testing out the cheat sheet that he had drawn out which showed the various pedal positions needed to create and simulate the workings of a natural Night Fury tailfin.

"Okay there, Bud. We're gonna take this nice and slow," Hiccup told the Night Fury with a pat to the dragon's side. Looking down to the cheat sheet he had hooked onto the saddle, the young Viking tried to determine what position to set the tailfin at before soaring further away from Berk. "Here we go. Here we go. Position three, no, four," he spoke out-loud to himself as he set the position as listed on the sheet.

\_\_\*\*So far so good, \*\*\_he observed. "Alright, it's go time. It's go time." Now the real test would begin.

"Come on, Buddy! Come on, Buddy!" Hiccup called out, but he was certain that he wasn't speaking to Toothless. No, he was encouraging himself to set aside the fear he felt. It was still hard, though. What if Toothless didn't trust him. There was nothing but water below. One slip and Hiccup would fall to an untimely death.

Flying under a rock arch, Hiccup felt his confidence beginning to soar. He could do this! "Yes it worked!" he spoke, but he wasn't referring to anything mechanical. No, he was pleased that his self-encouragement had driven away the fear. Now he could sit back and enjoy the ride

until they slammed into one of the rocky seastacks. "Sorry!" Trying to right them with momentum and force, all Hiccup succeeded in doing was slamming into another seastack opposite the one they had just hit. "That's my fault." Toothless, in annoyance, slapped Hiccup's cheek with one of his ear flaps. "Ah yeah, yeah, I'm on it. Position four. uh, three."

Setting the new tailfin position, they climbed higher into the sky and Hiccup felt the adrenaline rush at the acceleration. "Yeah! Go, baby! Yes! Oh, this is amazing! The wind in my cheat sheet!" That's not what he'd meant to say, but the important paper had come loose from its clip and was flying through the air. "Stop!"

As he twisted around to grab the paper, the wind lifted the ring on Hiccup's harness from its clip and he flew from the saddle. "No!" \_\_\*\*This isn't good! I can't fly and neither can Toothless! We need each other together!\*\*\_ Hiccup tried to grip Toothless's nearby wing, but the effort did not work. "Oh gosh! Oh gods! Oh, no!" As they fell, Hiccup tried to coach Toothless to ensure they could get themselves back into the air. "Alright, okay, you've gotta kind of angle yourself." All that succeeded was to send Toothless spinning. Hiccup continued trying, but it wasn't working; Toothless couldn't hear him over the sound of the wind.

Somehow, they fell just right that Hiccup was able to grip the saddle and pull himself back aboard. Once seated in the saddle again, the first thing Hiccup did was clip his safety wire back onto its hook.

In front of them was another large rocky face of another seastack. It was approaching quickly and, at the speed they were going, they would surely die if they made contact. Hiccup pulled the cheat sheet from his mouth and tried to find the right position for the tailfin. Unfortunately Hiccup could not read the paper as it fluttered in the heavy wind they were creating from their fall. Moment of truth! It was now or never! Throwing the cheat sheet to the wind (literally!),

Hiccup adjusted the tailfin position from memory. Over and over again, Hiccup changed the tailfin position, navigating them safely around the seastacks.

Passing the last seastack, Hiccup cheered for the small victory. Finally he understood the bond he shared with Toothless. Before, they had accepted each other, but Toothless was still uneasy about Hiccup. Now, though, Hiccup knew Toothless trusted him—and he trusted Toothless. Hardships would come, that was certain, but it was also certain that they would always triumph over whatever life threw their way. Toothless and Hiccup, together, as one!

\* \* \*

><p><strong>I know—the ending was not what I'd envisioned, but, as always, I forgot the ending that I'd planned to use for this one. Not to mention that there are so many "Test Drive" stories. Oh well, I liked the lyrics, at least.<strong>

\*\*See you all next time inspiration (and good music) strikes.\*\*

\*\*Posted: August 19, 2014\*\*

## 8. A Final Message

\*\*I haven't written anything in awhile, so I'll do a quick warm-up. This one is a bit—out there, but I hope you'll still enjoy!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>"Across the stratosphere, a final message: "Give my wife my love"—then nothing more—"<br>-\_Major Tom (Coming Home\_), Peter Schilling

888

She hadn't wanted him to go. Hanson Harrison Haddock III practically had to pry his wife Astrid from him as he packed his bags for the flight. He hadn't, for the life of him, understood why she had been so clingy. It wasn't like her. Besides, he was an airline pilot. Leaving for days at a time was nothing new.

As always, they had said their goodbyes in the airport terminal before he boarded along with his flight crew. This time, though, Hanson could not miss the sad glint in her bright blue eyes when they parted from their farewell kiss.

Sure this was a dangerous profession, but Hanson had been flying planes for years now. Besides, the planes were always checked by the airport mechanics before they were ever even cleared for take-off. The chance of system malfunction was always there, but it was slim and Hanson felt it worth the risk; he loved being in the air, among the clouds, far above the world.

"I'll call you as soon as I can. I love you, Millady," Hanson spoke his final words to his wife before boarding.

The cockpit was empty as Hanson and his co-pilot took their seats and

began the final check. By the time the check was completed, the passengers would be seated and preparing for take-off. Hanson had worked with many members of this crew before; they were wonderful and would do everything possible to make the trip as pleasant as they could for those aboard.

When all systems were checked, Hanson waited for the head flight attendant to report back from the cabin that all was well. He did not have to wait long for the knock on his cockpit door before the beautiful Heather entered.

"Everyone is ready for take-off, Captain Haddock," she reported.

"Wonderful. I will make the announcement now." Pressing a button, Hanson heard his own voice ring out throughout the plane. "Welcome aboard. This is your Captain speaking. We will soon be departing. In preparation for take-off, I ask that you remain seated with your seat in its upright and locked position. When we have leveled off and reached cruising speed, I will turn off the "Remain Seated" light. On behalf of myself and my entire crew, I wish you a wonderful trip and, as always, thank you for flying with us. We're glad to have you aboard!"

In his headphones, Hanson heard the "All Clear" from air-traffic control. Switching back on his microphone, he announced. "We have been cleared for take-off. Attendants take your positions."

As the flight attendants took their seats, Hanson expertly taxied the plane toward the runway. Take-off was always Hanson's favorite part of the plane ride. He loved the rapid acceleration and the almost-weightless feeling as the plane would lift skyward.

The runway spanned out in front of Hanson. He was ready. Pressing pedal to the floor, the plane sped up and Hanson was pressed back into his seat. As the runway started to come to its end, Hanson lifted up and the plane followed his command, raising into the air. Once in the air, Hanson adjusted based on the compass on his dash and finally leveled was not long before there was nothing but ocean beneath the plane. Now all that was left was to stay on the projected flight path (unless otherwise noted by air-traffic control) until they arrived closer to their destination.

They had been flying for several hours before anything out of the ordinary occurred. According to the tracking system, they had just passed the halfway point when the flashing and the beeping started. "W-What?" Hanson did not understand. He had checked everything! There couldn't possibly be anything wrong. Yet, there was. He was losing altitude and no amount of gas and pressure on the pedal was fixing the problem. The decline wasn't rapid, but the rate would still pose a problem. If it kept up, there would be nowhere to make an emergency landing—nowhere but in the ocean, that is.

In the midst of Hanson's panic, Heather entered the cockpit, shutting the door behind her. "Captain, we're losing altitude."

"Well aware of that, Heather," Hanson replied, distracted by his attempts to remedy the problem.

"What are you going to do?"

Hanson sighed. "First, I'll check with air-traffic control, but I'm certain they're going to tell me the obvious. Put 'er down in the water."

"What should I tell the passengers? They'll want to know."

This was a hard decision for Hanson. Should the crew sugarcoat the problem so there would not be panic in the cabin? The passengers had a right to know what was really going on though, right? "The truth. Tell them the truth," he finally decided.

Once Heather had left the cockpit, Hanson radioed in to air-traffic control. "Attention! This is Flight 801! We have an emergency situation!" He proceeded to relay his current coordinates and available information about the problem. As expected, he was told that the closest airport was too far away; they would not make it there the way things stood now. They would have to make the emergency landing. Hanson wasn't worried, though. All commercial airline pilots were trained to safely execute water landings. Everything would be fine.

"Attention passengers and crew," Hanson next radioed into the cabin. "By now, I'm sure you have been notified of our situation. We will be making an emergency water landing into the ocean. I, your Captain, will attempt to keep in contact with you regarding execution of this landing. If at any time I cannot communicate to the cabin, please listen to the flight attendants onboard as they will be instructed as to what to do upon landing. Above all, please do not panic! Your safety is of our utmost importance." Before he could say anything more, the electrical system cut out, rendering the radio useless. "Well, that's just great!" Hanson yelled out, sarcasm evident.

With the electrical system out, the craft was falling faster—and there was no way to stop it. So much for that emergency landing!\_\*\*At the rate we'll hit the ocean—there's no way anyone could possibly survive.\*\*\_

Heather appeared in the cockpit once again. "Instructions for the emergency landing, Captain Haddock?"

"I'm sorry, Heather," Hanson spoke as calmly as possible. "We're falling too fast. There's no—"

"Flight 801?" came the voice from air-traffic control over the radio. The electrical system was working again, but it probably would not last. "What is your situation? Update please!"

Hanson grabbed the mic and pressed the button to talk. He had limited time and he knew exactly what he needed to say. "Give my wife my love—" He finished just as the line went dead.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>As I said before this one is a little different than usual. Hope you all enjoyed!<strong>

\*\*See you all next time inspiration (and good music) strikes.\*\*

**\*\*Posted: August 22, 2014\*\***

## 9. My Reason To Be Brave

**\*\*Soâ€|in case you haven't been keeping up with my profile and have notice a lack of updates for my stories, I'll inform you all now that I can only update on weekends. Hopefully, I can get a chance to update a majority of my stories each weekend, but it may fall to every other weekend. I'll keep posting updates on my profile.\*\***

**\*\*LYRICS IN THIS "CHAPTER" REQUESTED BY Constantinus. Thank you for the suggestion! I hope this story lives up to expectations!\*\***

**\* \* \***

><p>"When you stand up and hold out your hand in the face of what I don't understand. My reason to be brave."<br>-\_Brave\_, Josh Groban

888

I'm not upset anymore. When our village elder first decided that Hiccup was the student to kill the Monstrous Nightmare in front of the entire village, I seethed with anger. My parents had been there. They saw me lose to "the village screw-up". How could I ever face them again? But then everything changed. Hiccup, yes, that same Hiccup, took me on the ride of my life. Literally. There was no way I could look at anything the same after that flight. He had convinced me that dragons were not the ruthless killers that we had always thought they were. Instead, I now saw that they were amazing and intelligent beings.

Now, though, the entire village was gathered and chanting Hiccup's name. They couldn't seriously think that Hiccup would be killing the Nightmareâ€|could they? I knew that he wouldn't, though. He had told me last night in the moonlit cove (the same one where I had discovered his biggest secret) that he would think of something.

I knew that I should be out there with the others listening to the Chief's opening speech, but I didn't want to be there; I wanted to be with Hiccup. Approaching him from behind, I told Hiccup, "Be careful with that dragon."

"It's not the dragon I'm worried by." I saw how his eyes shifted up to the Chief's chair as he said this.

"What are you going to do?" I wondered. He had not yet told me anything about his so-called plan.

"Put an end to this. I have to try."

\_\*\*Wellâ€|that's kinda vague.\*\*\_ I still didn't know, but I guessed that, instead of killing the dragon, Hiccup would try to train it as he had done with Toothless.

"Astrid, if something goes wrong, just make sure they don't find Toothless."

"I will." This was an easy promise to make, but there was no way I was letting him off easy without making a promise of his own. "Justâ€¦promise me it won't go wrong."

Before he could answer me, Gobber arrived from inside the arena and ushered Hiccup inside. The gate closed behind him and I stepped up to watch. Hiccup grabbed his shield and a small dagger (which I just knew that he wouldn't be using) and braced himself.

Once the cage was open, the Nightmare burst out, making its fiery entrance. To say that I wasn't scared at this moment would be a lie. I was terrified and I knew that Hiccup probably felt the sameâ€¦if not more, seeing as how he was the one locked in with the dragon.

Hiccup backed up and I watched as he dropped his shield and dagger. The actions were creating a stir among the villagers who were waiting for blood to spill. Until now, I was not even aware that my own heart was beating rapidly within my chest. It's strange how I once thought that I would be brave enough to be in Hiccup's shoes, taking on the Nightmare, though, instead of training it.

Continuing to watch, I saw Hiccup held out his hand and talked gently to the red Nightmare. I had not yet seen Hiccup train a dragon, so I did not understand. Is this how he does it? Regardless, it is a bold move, seeing as how the Nightmare could just as easily take Hiccup's small arm off with one chomp down of its powerful jaws and jagged teeth.

Hiccup then cast aside his helmet and this proved to be the final straw for the gathered villagers. From above, the chief ordered that the match be ended, but Hiccup refused. He placed his hand out in front of the dragon once again, letting the Nightmare sniff it.

I smiled at the touching moment and that was when I understood why I no longer felt as brave as I once thought myself to be. It was because, back then, I had not had a reason to be brave. I fought for merely for recognition, to find my place within the dragon-fighting Vikings of our village. Now, I knew. Hiccup is my reason to be brave. I was certain that Hiccup would put his own life on the line for mine and I would do the same for himâ€¦which is exactly what I had to do next because it was here, at this very moment, where everything went wrong. Good thing he never promised me that it wouldn't go wrong.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Felt like I was rewriting the scene from Try To Be Brave again. I will say that some of the inspiration for the writing of this "chapter" was taken from my own story. Hopefully, it didn't feel too much like a carbon copy of that scene. Also, I don't know if I'm quite satisfied with the endingâ€¦but I think it's okay, considering that I haven't written anything in over a week. Hope you all enjoyed!<strong>

\*\*THANKS AGAIN TO Constantinus FOR THE LYRICS SUGGESTION!\*\*

\*\*See you all next time inspiration (and good music) strikes.  
\*\*

\*\*Posted: August 30, 2014\*\*

## 10. Who Would've Thought?

**\*\*Another story outside my normâ€¦I'll give this a try.\*\***

**\*\*THIS CHAPTER RATED "T"(PROBABLY BORDERLINE "M", BUT NOT QUITE) FOR MENTIONS OF VIOLENCE AND RAPE. YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED.\*\***

\* \* \*

><p>"Who would've thought that a boy like me could come to this?"<br>\_(I Just) Died In Your Arms\_, Cutting Crew

888

He was the last person anyone would ever expect to do something like thisâ€¦and, yet, here he was, the one accused. It was not his fault that a young woman was now dead, yet, he would be the one completing the life sentence in prisonâ€¦if they did not give him the death penalty for this. No, he had just been in the wrong place at the wrong timeâ€¦but none of that mattered now. The Gods really did hate himâ€¦

Hanson Harrison Haddock III knew all too well not to be out late. The peaceful town grew shady much too quickly after the sun set. Gangs were everywhere and Hanson, unwillingly, was a part of the most ruthless one in town. Why had he ever let his cousin talk him into joining that gang? Now, more than ever, Hanson wished he had never accepted the offer.

In their gang, The Hairy Hooligans, everyone had a nickname. There was his cousin Snotlout and the twins Ruffnut and Tuffnut among many othersâ€¦and then there was he, Hiccup.

On this night, Snotlout had brought in a womanâ€¦"chained and gagged, yet fighting her fate. Hiccup had kept to the back, not interested in the scene unfolding before him: his cousin, his ruthless cousin raping the girl. She looked strong, but even she could not overpower the strength of the men from this street gang.

When they'd finished, Snotlout pulled out the gun he kept on his belt. Hiccup kept to the shadows still, knowing that the gunshot would draw law enforcement.

He felt sorry for the girl and wished he could help. Even from this distance, he could see fear shining in her crystal blue eyes. Her loose blonde hair, dirty from the cold and unforgiving ground, fell around her. She was trembling, but trying hard to stay strong.

"Any last words?" Snotlout mocked, knowing full well that she was still gaged. "Very well, then." He pulled the trigger and the girl fell limp to the ground.

From a distance, a siren sounded and it grew closer. Police in this town were always ready to break up gang fights as they happened so frequently.

"Hooligans, scatter!" Snotlout ordered.

All the Hooligans took off in a plethora of directionsâ€|except Hiccup. He could not run fast, a childhood injury slowing his progress. As a young boy, he had broken his left ankle. Not receiving medical treatment for the injury, it had healed wrong and still hurt him to this day. It was for this very reason that the police found him not ten minutes later only a short distance from the spot where Snotlout had raped and shot dead the girl.

Hanging his head and glancing back to the alley, Hiccup whispered an apology as his hands were cuffed behind his back and he was led to the waiting police car.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Haven't written anything in a while, so I decided to do a warm-up story. I know that most probably didn't like this story, but I just needed something to get back into it. Hopefully now I can get working on the next chapter of YOPS. <strong>

\*\*See you all next time inspiration (and good music) strikes.\*\*

\*\*Posted: January 19, 2015\*\*

## 11. Ghost in the Mirror

\*\*LYRICS IN THIS "CHAPTER" REQUESTED BY AutomailGrell. Thanks for the suggestion!\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>"There's a ghost in the mirror<br>I'm afraid more than ever<br>My feet have led me straight into my grave"<br>-\_Glass Heart Hymn\_, Paper Route

888

The old mansion sat atop a hill, overlooking the small town of Berk. Once the grandest house, home to Berk's wealthiest family, the mansion had stood vacant for almost fifty years. Hanson Harrison Haddock III, known as "Hiccup" to all who mattered, had lived in Berk all his life; he knew the story of the mansion and why it no longer saw life. Forty-six years ago, the family had been brutally slain by their angered butler, a greedy man with an underlying jealousy of the family for whom he served. It is even said, down in Berk, that the house was haunted by the ghosts of the familyâ€|a man, his wife, and their teenaged daughter. For this very reason, no one had ever contemplated razing the mansion or even keeping up with their grounds (the groundskeeper had fled upon finding the murdered bodies insideâ€|or so the story says). Though the mansion had become dilapidated and fallen into a state of disrepair, no one was brave enough to approach the grounds.

Hiccup, himself, was content to look upon the mansion but only from the safety of Berk. He did not want to approach the house, but, unfortunately, his friends had other plans.

"I've heard all their gold is stored in some vault below the house on the grounds," Samuel "Snotlout" Jorgenson, Hiccup's cousin, was

saying one day as the smaller boy approached the groups.

"All of it? That would be, like,â€|a lot," Rachele, "Ruffnut" Thorston chimed in with yet another stellar response. Her and her twin brother Thomas "Tuffnut" Thorston weren't exactly the brightest people Hiccup knewâ€|but neither was his cousin, for that matter.

"You do realize that place is haunted, right?" Hiccup told them, his voice confident in an attempt to dissuade them from approaching the grounds.

"H-Haunted?" Frederick "Fishlegs" Ingermann spoke up. Hiccup wasn't surprised that his remark would spook the larger boy; Fishlegs had a fear of the dark (though he insisted to Hiccup that his phobia remain a secret).

Snotlout scoffed. "That's just an old wives' tale. They just don't want anyone finding their way up there and getting hurt."

"I say we go up there and find that money," Tuffnut spoke up, siding with Snotloutâ€|just like always.

"I agree! Who's with me?" Snotlout looked around to the group. The twins were nodding without hesitation.

"Uhâ€|you guys can go. I think I'll sit this one out," Fishlegs told them.

Hiccup sighed, knowing that Snotlout and the twins would not be changing their minds. The smaller boy really did not want to go, but he knew that someone with a sense of reason should probably go with those three. "I guess I have no choice," he finally told them.

"Good. We meet at dark tonight, so find a way to get there without alerting your parents," Snotlout told them before walking away, the twins following almost immediately.

Watching them leave, Hiccup thought about what he had just agreed to do. He could not believe that he had decided to follow those three to that haunted mansion.

"Hiccup, you don't have to go with them, you know," Fishlegs softly spoke to his friend.

"I know, Fishlegs, but someone with a sense of reason needs to go and make sure those three don't get themselves killed. Not that I want to go up there, butâ€|"

"Just be careful, okay?" Fishlegs interrupted. "I just have a bad feeling."

888

The four friends met at dark just as they had planned. Each carried a flashlight. Snotlout and the twins had also brought along bags which they claimed they would put the gold into once they found it.

Snotlout, without fear, led the group up the hill to the abandoned mansion. Hiccup found himself involuntarily jumping at every small sound. He could hear the wind rustling through the building that stood before them. The light of his flashlight caught movement. Moving the beam of light slightly, Hiccup saw that it was just a cat, a black cat. \_\*\*How fittingâ€¦\*\*\_

Anticipating that he would have to break down the door, Snotlout made to kick it in, but Hiccup stopped him. "Wait," he said, feeling bad at the thought of desecrating this mansion. Snotlout shot him a look that clearly said "You're crazy!" as Hiccup approached the door and turned the fancy doorknob. Much to his surprise, the door opened easily. \_\*\*Don't need much security when the whole city naturally keeps away from this place, I guess. \*\*\_

Inside, the mansion was dark and the friends were glad they had remembered to bring flashlights. The home, once lit by electricity and lively, was desolate and Hiccup briefly wondered if it was less creepy during the day. Forty-six years' worth of dust layered on everything within the mansion and Hiccup was glad that he did not have asthma.

"Imagine living hereâ€¦well, minus the dust and with electricity and stuffâ€¦" Ruffnut piped up, softly. "I'd feel like a princess if I lived in a house like this!"

"Too bad you wouldn't look like one," Tuffnut retorted. Snide comments exchanged between the twins was nothing new.

"Quit fighting," Snotlout ordered. "We need to head down. The gold is below ground somewhere. Come on, we need to find a set of stairs."

As they walked, Hiccup listened closer and he thought he heard a sound. It wasâ€¦gentle and pleasant almost. "Can any of you hear that?" he asked to the rest of his friends, but they had already disappeared up ahead. Hiccup knew where they were going, so he decided to follow the sound. He could catch up with them after he found out where the sound was coming from.

Listening closely, Hiccup followed as if drawn to the sound. He could tell he was approaching the sound because, though it remained soft, it became clearer. The sound had led him up several flights of stairs to a closed door. Now, he could recognize the beautiful melody of a music box. The family had a teenaged daughter. This must be her room.

Hiccup did not want to enter the room; he did not come here to sneak into the bedroom of a long-dead teenage girl, but the door opened slowly before he could walk away. Curiosity overcame him and Hiccup looked inside. Like the rest of the house, the bedroom was covered in dust but he could still see a bed, cleanly made, waiting for a girl who would never sleep in it again. Across the room, there was a dresser and upon sat the open music box. Walking over, Hiccup closed the music box and the eerie silence returned. A folded handkerchief lay beside the music box. Sewn into the top of the silky fabric were two letters. "A. H.," Hiccup read. \_\*\*Must be the girl's initials\*\*\_. Waitâ€¦he knew the story. What was the girl's name again? Why could he suddenly not remember?

A mirror stood in the corner furthest from the door. Drawn to it, Hiccup approached and looked into the glass. He expected to see his own reflection staring back at him, but instead he saw the complete opposite. In the glass, Hiccup saw a beautiful young woman, about aged fifteen. She wore a crystal-blue dress (that matched her eyes) and her blonde hair was drawn back into an intricate braid.

With a start, Hiccup realized who this person was. He was staring into the face of the long-dead girl, murdered right here in this very house). \_\*\*The stories were true,\*\*\_ Hiccup knew now. \_\*\*This house really is haunted!\*\*\_

Hearing a sound behind him, Hiccup turned to face the door. He could not alert his friends to what he had just learned. Hiccup did not even have time to scream.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>Oh manâ€¦I had so much fun writing this story! I almost want to write a full-length story like this someday. Also, I'm sorry if this story felt rushed. It's almost 2AM and I need to be at work tomorrow at 9AM. I wanted to get this out, though, because I was super excited about it. Hope you all liked it.<strong>

\*\*See you all next time inspiration (and good music) strikes.\*\*

\*\*Posted: January 25, 2015

>Two days until my 24<strong>\*\*th\*\*\*\* birthday!\*\*

## 12. The Neon Lights Are Bright On Broadway

\*\*It's been too long. I need to write another short "warm-up" story. Got a pretty good idea for this next story. Speaking of good ideas, that last story ("Ghost in the Mirror") is going to be a full-length story. I've begun to plan it out, but I don't have an EPT for it yet. Stay tuned!\*\*

\*\*I don't usually review reply in this story (responses are PM'd or posted in my forum "Afterwords"), but this one deserves public review credit.\*\*

\_\*\*Guest (anonymous)\*\*\_\*\*: I did not even think of Toothless as the black cat! I just figured that black cats are spooky, so it added to the atmosphere, but we can say it was Toothless.\*\*

\* \* \*

><p>"They say the neon lights are bright on Broadway<br>They say there's always magic in the air"  
>-<em>On Broadway<em>, The Drifters

888

It had been two years already. Two years since he had last seen his ex-girlfriend Astrid Hofferson. The break-up had been unexpected. Two weeks after high school graduation, she had left their small hometown of Berk destined for the Big Apple and the neon lights of Broadway. Her parents would never let her pursue her acting passion. "You'll

never make it," they would tell her. Headstrong as she was, Astrid had been determined to prove them wrong. She had left in the middle of the night, never even telling her boyfriend of her intentions. He had tried to call her, but he immediately found that she'd changed her number. Her Facebook account had been deactivated. No means of communication reached her. She did not want to be traced.

Hiccup did not want to believe that their relationship could be over, just like that. However, doubt crept in as the time passed and Astrid did not return or even try to get in touch. \_\*\*I hope you found what you were looking for out there, Astrid,\*\*\_ Hiccup found himself thinking often. Two years had gone by so fast. In the time, Hiccup had started attending business classes at Berk University; he was destined to take over as CEO of the company currently run by his father. He really did not want to take over the company, but he knew that he could never just run off into show business like Astrid. She had it allâ€"looks, talent, ambitionâ€"everything that he didn't have. If anyone could make it on Broadway, it was her.

Two years already and Hiccup still could not bring himself to date other girls. It was not that he couldn't get any other girls. Lately, his looks had changed. He'd grown taller. His hair grew longer. His jawline had tightened. Girls often looked his way, but he would have none of it. Those who knew his past experiences with relationships thought he was just nervous, afraid that another girl would leave him in the way Astrid had. That wasn't it at all, though. Hiccup refused to date because he could do no better than Astrid. Even two years later, Hiccup still loved Astrid.

As the two year anniversary of the break-up approached, Hiccup finally decided to stop moping and feeling sorry for himself. If Astrid could just up and leave and find success in New York, what was stopping him from doing the same? He had no intentions of finding a niche on Broadway; acting was not his passion. All he wanted was to rekindle his relationship with Astrid. She couldn't possibly have forgotten him in these past two years, could she? Still a small part of him held doubts. Say that Astrid did find success on Broadway and he was able to find her in the large entertainment city of New York, would she even want to still see him anymore? He, Hanson Harrison "Hiccup" Haddock III was just a reminder of an unsatisfying past.

Still, he had to try. Without a word to his father, Hiccup packed up everything in his apartment and stuffed it all (as best he could) into his car. Just as Astrid had done two years ago, Hiccup left in the middle of the night. Never looking back. No regrets.

888

New York was larger than he could ever have imagined. it felt massive compared to Berk. In Berk, everyone knew each other and the community was tight-knit. Here in New York, Hiccup knew that he would get lost in the crowd.

Now that he was here, though, Hiccup questioned his motives. Would he even find Astrid? He would need a job. What could he possibly do for income? \_\*\*Well, this was stupid.\*\*\_

Hiccup decided to take a walk on Broadway. Maybe that would give him a clue as to where he could find his ex-girlfriend. Even that turned

out to be harder than Hiccup expected. He knew that Broadway was more than just a simple stretch of road, but he had been naïve, thinking that he could just move up to New York and instantly find Astrid Hofferson.

Discouraged, Hiccup was about to turn around and leave, go who knows where, when an advertisement caught his attention. It was a flashy electronic billboard advertising one of the many shows on Broadway, but that was not what demanded Hiccup's focus. Instead, it was the face staring back at him. Hiccup hadn't seen her in two years and she had grown, like him, but he'd recognize that face anywhere. The crystal blue eyes and soft smile. Astrid Hofferson. Hiccup smiled. "You did it. I knew you'd succeed, Astrid." The sign flashed the name of the production, but that's not what Hiccup cared about. All he wanted to know was the theater where Astrid's show was being played and the time it would begin. Though he did not have enough money right now for a ticket, Hiccup knew just the way to see Astrid again.

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Hiccup waited near the theater, watching as spectators left. The show had just let out and Hiccup could set his plan into motion. Unseen, Hiccup crept to the back of the theater to wait by the back door. When Astrid had changed out of her show clothes and wiped away her stage make-up, Hiccup was certain she would leave this way. He sure hoped so, anyway.

The alley was lit, but Hiccup still found shadows to conceal himself. Leaning against the brick back wall of the theater, Hiccup waited. Twenty minutes later, the back door opened and Hiccup saw Astrid leave. Her long blonde hair, grown out a bit since he had last seen her, was tied back in a loose side-ponytail, as if she just wanted to get it out of the way, but not bother much more with it.

Before she could walk too far away, Hiccup spoke up. "I'm glad you found what you were looking for, Astrid."

He watched as she stopped instantly in her tracks, recognizing his voice but not believing that it could truly be him.

"I can see, though, why you left Berk," Hiccup continued, pushing himself off the wall to walk over closer to her. "It's just as they say. The neon lights are bright on Broadway."

Astrid turned and Hiccup watched her eyes grow large, taking in all of him. "H-Hiccup—what are you—?"

"I wanted to find you, Astrid. It's been two years, but I've never stopped thinking about you, loving you." When Astrid did not respond, Hiccup continued, filling the silence, "It hurt so much when you left and that's why I wanted to see you again. I just thought it would be harder to find you."

Stepping closer to her ex-boyfriend, Astrid brought her hand up to run it along Hiccup's face. "I just can't believe you're here. Not that I don't want to see you, Hiccup. It's just—like magic or a dream—surreal."

Shifting the conversation away from him, Hiccup asked, "So, you've

found success here on Broadway, I guess?"

Astrid nodded in reply. "It was hard at first. In the beginning, it seemed like all I was met with were rejections, but I've been doing this show for a few months now and I really like it. You should come see it sometimeâ€|or are youâ€|returning to Berk?"

Hiccup heard the sadness that crept into Astrid's voice (as much as she tried to hide it). "I'm hoping to find a place up here. It'll take time, though, so I guess I'll be sleeping in my car in some public parking lot somewhere. When I get some money, though, I will come see your show. I promise. For now, though, I should probably go find a place to park and sleep for the night. Good luck, Astrid. You still have my cell phone number, right? I would really like to stay in touch with you." He turned to leave, but Astrid stopped him before he could walk too far away.

"Wait, Hiccup! Don't leave. Public parking lots can get dangerous sometimes, especially here. I have an apartment nearby. If you want to drive over there, I can show you the way. You can stay with me until you find a place of your own."

Hiccup smiled\_\*\*. It's nice to know that Astrid still cares about me. Maybe there's a chance that weâ€|no, probably not.\*\*\_ His smile faltered as a thought came to mind. "That sounds great and all, but what about your boyfriend? You're a beautiful and successful Broadway actress. Surely, you have a boyfriend that lives with you and all. What would he think if you brought your ex-boyfriend home to live with you for a while?" He started to walk away once again. "But thanks for the offer. I really do appreciate it."

Again, Hiccup did not get a chance to walk too far away as Astrid grabbed ahold of his arm. "Hiccup!" she reprimanded. "I live alone, Hiccup and I do not have a boyfriend. I have not dated anyone sinceâ€|.since I left Berk. Partially because I was working to establish my acting career, butâ€|also becauseâ€|" She trailed off and Hiccup waited for her to finish which she did a moment later. "â€|because I missed you. I still love you, Hiccup and I'm sorry for leaving you and not trying harder to stay in touch."

Hearing this news, Hiccup smiled and took Astrid's hand. "In that case, I would be honored to take up temporary residence in your apartment. Let's go to my car and you can show me the way to your place."

It would take time, Hiccup knew, to fix their broken relationship. There would be a lot of catching up required to fill in the two year gap, but Hiccup was optimistic that, if anyone could rekindle such a relationship, it would be him and Astrid.

\* \* \*

><p><strong>I really like this warm-up story! It was fun to write and...like with the last chapter, I may consider also turning this one into a full-length story (one that expands on their past and also adds on to their future). What do you all think?<strong>

\*\*See you all next time inspiration (and good music) strikes.\*\*

**\*\*Posted: April 28, 2015\*\***

### 13. Lately I've Been Losing Sleep

**\*\*I really liked how the last chapter turned out, so I'll be doing a mini-series based on that (and a full-length story adaption is also in the works). This "chapter" and the next "chapter" relate back to the "On Broadway" chapter. This "chapter" takes place before. Next "chapter" takes place after.\*\***

**\*\*Want to "stay in the know" with information about my stories? Like bonus content? Then, follow me on Twitter! (It's NOT a personal account; you will only get info related to my fiction). My current Twitter information is located on my fanfiction profile if you're interested!\*\***

\* \* \*

><p>Lately, I've been, I've been losing sleep<br>Dreaming about the things that we could be  
>-<em>Counting Stars<em>, OneRepublic

888

Toss and turn. Over and over again. All night long. From the far wall, the clock chorused its continual tick-tock. Hanson Harrison Haddock III stared up at the dark ceiling and he just knew that he would not be sleeping again tonight. It had been this way since his girlfriend, Astrid Hofferson, had left. She had not even told him that she was leaving; she'd told no one. Hanson (or, Hiccup, as he was referred to most of the time) felt slightly betrayed that Astrid had not even given notice to him about her plans. Then, when he'd tried to get in touch with her on the day after she had left, he'd found out quite quickly that she had disabled all means of communication. Her cell phone number was disconnected and her Facebook account deactivated. There was no way to contact her.

The sleepless nights had started not long after. Sometimes, Hiccup found it easier not to sleep, though. His sleep was always filled with dreams of her. In his dreams, Hiccup was happy and that made it even harder to wake up to a reality where Astrid was not around.

Over the past year, Hiccup had seen the concern on his parents' faces. They knew what had happened and they also knew that their son was taking it very hard. However, there was nothing they could do about it. They had tried taking Hiccup to the doctor who'd prescribed anti-depressant pills. Hiccup had taken them for about a week, just to please his parents, before making excuses and (secretly) throwing them away. Shortly after, he just stopped taking them altogether, leaving the bottle to sit and collect dust on the top shelf of the family's medicine cabinet.

In another attempt to help Hiccup, his father, Stanton Haddock, had pushed for his son to begin attending classes at Berk University. Though reluctant, Hiccup eventually applied and was accepted into the Berk University business program. Hiccup hated every moment of it, though. He did not want to take over and become CEO of the family corporation. It was not his dream. He also knew, though, that he

wasn't Astrid. There was no way he'd ever be as strong as she had been to just leave and go out in pursuit of happiness and fulfillment.

But, what if he could? What if he could just walk away from Berk forever? Travel to New York and find Astrid? It sounded crazy, but Hiccup was known for his crazy ideas. The idea had come to him one evening while he was home alone; his father putting in long hours at the family corporation and his mother closing at the animal shelter where she worked. Hiccup was eating a microwavable dinner and watching Wheel of Fortune. He used to guess the puzzles as the letters were revealed and Astrid would laugh at his accuracy. Tonight, on one particular puzzle ("Phrase"), there was one four-letter word that was giving all three contestants a hard time. The only letters in place were an "H" at the beginning and an "E" at the end. Since Astrid left, Hiccup did not often guess the puzzles because it brought back painful memories. However, this word seemed to stand out to him. What was it? It took him several minutes (and several more revelations of additional letters in the phrase) to piece it together. **Hope**. Hope is a four-letter word. Hope that's what I need. I need to have hope that I can find Astrid, no matter how crazy it seems. **\_**

Finishing his microwavable dinner, Hiccup switched off the TV. He tossed his plastic dish into the trash and walked up to his bedroom. Right then and there, he resolved to find Astrid. Hiccup did not care if it took the rest of his life. He would find her. He would not lose hope. With new resolve, Hiccup packed most of his clothes into several suitcases and then proceeded to pack up his car with anything he could want and need (trying to fit it all into the small space that his car offered).

If he was going to leave, tonight would be best. His father had already said that he probably would not be home until about 11PM and his mother's animal shelter did not close until 9PM, but then she would normally stay a little later to make sure that everything was in order for the person assigned to open the next morning. Time was running out; it was already nearing 8:30.

When Hiccup was satisfied, he turned off all the lights and exited the house, locking the door on his way out. Inside, he left no note, no indication of the adventure that he was embarking on. If he had told his parents, he knew they would try to stop him. **Once I find Astrid, I'll check back in with them.** Until then, he shut off his cell phone and took his seat behind the wheel. Taking one final glance at his childhood home, Hiccup turned on his car and backed slowly out of his driveway. Before he could change his mind, Hiccup drove away, leaving behind his childhood home and memories. **No going back now. Not until I find Astrid.**

\* \* \*

<p><strong>Just a nice little short story to show some of the "in-between" scenes that there was not enough time to address in the last "story". As I said, I'm planning out for "On Broadway" to be one of my full-length stories someday. Next "story" will also return to this same storyline and thenâ€|who knows?<strong>

**See you all next time inspiration (and good music) strikes.**

**\*\*Posted: May 31, 2015\*\***

End  
file.